

[Shri Virdhi Chander Jain]

hol on Doordarshan, radio and in newspapers and other Government media. These advertisements are unaesthetic, provocative and also hurt public feelings.

(vi) Construction of a bridge on Yamuna near Shergarh

SHRI MANVENDRA SINGH (Mathura) : For the last 30 years, residents of Mathura and Aligarh districts have been demanding a bridge on the Yamuna near Shergarh in Mathura district. Special importance is attached to the construction of this bridge as it will provide a direct link between Mathura and Aligarh districts. This will reduce the existing distance by 150 kilometres. At the same time, the proposed bridge will cut down the distance between Mathura and Chhata and Mathura and Moth (two tehsils of this district) by about 100 kilometres. This bridge would prove to be a boon to development in the area. The most important benefit will be a relief from the increasing pressure of heavy vehicles and other transport on the route connecting Meerut, Ghaziabad and Aligarh with Bombay and Calcutta. The distance to be covered would also be reduced to a large extent. Similarly traffic moving from Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur and Agra towards Aligarh, Ghaziabad and Meerut will be greatly benefitted. The increasing pressure of heavy vehicles and other traffic, moving to and from Mathura, Delhi, Ghaziabad and Aligarh, will also ease off.

Nearly 8,000 vehicles moving to and from the Mathura Oil Refinery everyday, will also have to cover less distance. Increasing traffic on both National Highways will greatly benefit.

Considering the increasing pressure of traffic on National Highways and the long-standing demand of the public, I request the Government to construct a bridge on the Yamuna near Shergarh without further delay.

[English]

(vii) Need to charge concessional fare from Haj pilgrims and to provide them other facilities

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN (Kishanganj) : The annual Haj pilgrimage takes

regularly 27,000 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. The pilgrimage logistics are organised by the Haj Committee with the support of the Government. That includes arrangements for transportation of pilgrims from India to Saudi Arabia and back, by air and by sea, and their accommodation and welfare while in Saudi Arabia. The Haj Committee Act is out of date, as the selection of pilgrims from various States has been decentralised. I urge the Government that the Haj Committee Act should be amended at the earliest possible. A policy decision should be taken soon about the availability of ships for transportation of Haj pilgrims in 1989, and on the question of transferring the subsidy so far available only to pilgrims travelling by sea, to pilgrims travelling by air, to bridge the gap between the sea and air fares, as also on the method for determination of the Haj air fare.

Air India must look upon Haj service as a national responsibility, and not as a commercial venture, and Haj air fare should be fixed at 2/3 of the normal IATA return fare, and all economy class pilgrims should receive a subsidy of 1/6 of IATA fare. It may be added that the royalty payable under Saudi Arabian regulations to the Saudi Arabian Airlines in case the latter decides not to exercise the option of transportation of pilgrims one way. Air India should absorb the royalty.

The uncertainty and last-minute rise in fare level be avoided. The programme of flights of Haj must be published at least two months before the commencement of flights

I would urge the formation of a Standing Committee at the Central level, with representation of Ministries of External Affairs, Finance, Civil Aviation and Surface Transport to take quick decisions whenever matters are referred by the Haj Committee for approval of Government.

The Haj Committee, whose term has expired, must be reconstituted immediately.

(viii) Demand for inclusion of Telugu films in film festivals.

SHRI K. RAMACHANDRA REDDY (Hindupur) : A great injustice was done

to the Telugu film industry by various agencies of the Government, while films were selected for International Film Festival and Filmotsava. Though twenty-one films produced in various Indian languages were selected and screened for foreign audiences by the Indian panorama section, no Telugu film was selected during 1987-88. The reasons given for non-selection of any Telugu film cannot stand the test of scrutiny.

"SWAI MUTYAM", a Telugu film produced in 1987 was unanimously selected by the Film Federation of India as the only film worthy of representing India in the Oscar Award competition. Even this film was not selected for Indian Panorama for 1987.

For the Film Festival which is being held in Japan, 25 films have been selected from various Indian languages. But not a single Telugu film has been found suitable. I, therefore, request the Minister of Information and Broadcasting and the Minister of Culture to look into the matter and ensure that justice is done to Telugu films.

(ix) Need to take steps to check gold smuggling

DR. DATTA SAMANT (Bombay South Central): About 25 to 30 tonnes of gold is smuggled in our country every year. Major part of it is from Dubai and it is mainly smuggled through Western Coast, Indo-Pak border and through Air. The basic reason is high profit margin as gold prices in international market are much lower than those prevailing in our country. Profit margin works out to be one lakh rupees per k.g. The small timers make about Rs. 1000 in each tola of gold.

The specialised syndicate under cover of private insurance charge premium of just six to eight per cent of the value of precious metal being smuggled to India and it is totally reliable private insurance cover to illegal gold shipment of any value. In case consignment is seized by enforcement agencies, full payment of the value of the gold is made by Insurance Company. It is only 5 per cent of the total gold smuggled that is seized by government agencies.

Smuggled gold biscuits are having number and wrapped in papers which are numbered. Even this gold is caught by Customs, copy of Panchanama with all these details help the smugglers to get full payment from Insurance Company.

The entire activity is now marked by separate syndicate specialising in financing gold purchase from open market. Similarly collecting the sale proceeds, conversion into foreign currency through mainly Hawala operators and under cover banking processes, are thoroughly specialised jobs undertaken by different groups of people. Many times Customs Officers are also involved in helping drain of money from our country. I urge upon government to take immediate steps to stop smuggling of gold

(x) Need to clear the drinking water project submitted by the Government of Gujarat

SHRI DIGVIJAY SINH (Surendranagar): The Saurashtra and Kutch region of Gujarat suffers greater water shortages than any other region of India. To counteract this, a project of Rs. 550 crores has been evolved to bring water in pipes from the Narmada Dam. The amount invested will be recovered from toll tax from a new bridge to be built across the Gulf of Cambay which would shorten the distance of vehicular traffic from the South to Saurashtra by 80 km. Moreover, revenue will be earned by putting a gas pipeline over the bridge.

As this will be economically the most feasible proposition, it should get priority amongst all over schemes. I request the government to give special attention in its early clearance.

(xi) Need to resolve the problems relating to rehabilitation of the displaced persons from Pak-occupied Kashmir

SHRI JANAK RAJ GUPTA (Jammu): A good number of problems relating to the rehabilitation of the displaced persons of Pak-occupied Kashmir of 1947, are still pending. These problems have been discussed at different levels on more than one occasion in the past, but no decision has been taken so far.